



ASHA KIRAN

The Asha for Education Newsletter

Vol. 2, Issue 3, May-Jun 1999

About Asha

Asha for education is a non-profit voluntary organization dedicated to the support of basic education in India. Asha strives to provide financial assistance to educate underprivileged children in India and to increase awareness within the local community about these issues. Asha's actions are based on the firm belief that education is a critical and effective catalyst for social and economic change in India.

Shop the web!

Visit <http://www.ashanet.org/shop.html>

Sign up for the Visa Next Card through the Asha website and you will help contribute \$10 to educate underprivileged children in India.

Buy books, CD's, or videos and upto 5% of your purchase will go to Asha.

Buy toys through the website and 25% of all purchases will go to help educate children in India.

All this at no extra cost to you!

Asha Web Resources

Go to <http://www.ashanet.org/> and check out the various links!

Mailing lists: Set up chapter email lists using the mailing list manager.

Calendars: Use a web-based calendar to post chapter events and meetings.

Letters & Receipts: Chapters can use the Ashanet site to automate printing letters and receipts.

The Asha Star Story:

The Asha Star program began in 1995 with a small group of Asha-LA volunteers taking direct ownership of a project. It started in response to some mounting concerns:

a) New projects translated to

increased responsibility for the volunteers.

b) The transient presence of volunteers at a chapter made sustained impact very difficult; burnout for the remaining volunteers was imminent.

c) A field trip to India and discussions with the project coordinators there showed that donors dropped out within 2 years when involvement was lacking.

Unless we came up with a new structure, we knew our efforts would be in vain. To guarantee long term success, we had to put first things first. Personal involvement became the highest priority; fundraising, respected and sought in equal measure, took the second place.

The solution to this complex problem was simple and rather elegant. It came from a realization that it takes only a few committed people (the Asha Stars) to tackle a small education project. Under this vision, each volunteer takes personal responsibility for her/his project and frees the rest of Asha to work on other issues.

Typically, Asha Stars operate in groups of 5-10 people depending on the size of the project. Each star guarantees financial support of ~\$300 per year towards their project. Once committed, the stars work to take the project to self-reliance. As the teams are small, accountability is self-contained. Asha Stars are not confined by group meetings or their geographic location. Their commitment bridges the distance between them.

Projects are directed through personal involvement from these

small teams in cooperation with the volunteers in India. Each team has a coordinator who maintains detailed information about the project. Most coordinators visit their project sites periodically, keep the team well informed, seek input from teammates, and facilitate decision making. Progress reports are posted on the web regularly, thus spreading awareness and enabling new volunteers to join the effort.

There was a perfect fit between this model and the ground realities. Within 2 years, 40 Asha Stars emerged to support 6 out of 8 Asha-LA projects and helped set Asha-LA on a stable course.

The Asha Star structure is effective and comes with numerous advantages. As responsibilities are broken down and evenly distributed among small teams, the model is amazingly scaleable. Owing to the high degree of personal involvement, it is also an inspiring path for Asha to take and transition into a soul stirring movement.

- D.P. Prakash

The 2nd Asha Conference

29th-31st May '99, Boston (MIT). Asha's phenomenal growth over the past two years necessitated an all-chapter meet to discuss various issues. The conference will help establish efficient decision making processes while retaining Asha's egalitarian framework. The next edition will cover the conference and its outcome. More details are available at the [ashanet](http://www.ashanet.org/) web page. All volunteers are welcome to participate in the conference and help shape Asha's future!

Dallas, May 15 th & 22 nd Contact Farida (972 599 1433)	The playgrounds at the intersection of Forest lane and Inwood road in Dallas will soon be the site of some cricketing action, thanks to Asha Dallas' double wicket tournament.
Indiana, May 15 th , Indianapolis. Contact Kumar (317 582 1306)	<i>Utsav</i> , Asha Indiana's annual spring fundraiser is being held at the Jewish Community Center. Dinner will be served at 6:30 PM, followed by music, dance performances and dancing till late!
Kentucky, Contact Rajesh (502 897-5665)	Asha's newest chapter! Volunteers at Louisville will be making presentations at various & programs to raise funds and attract new members.
MIT, May 8 th , Burlington High School, MA. Contact Melli (603 888 2783)	Asha MIT presents <i>Vidhyanjali</i> (An offering to knowledge), a Bharatnatyam performance by internationally renowned Alarmel Valli. The Padmashri awardee, the foremost exponent of the Pandanallur tradition in Bharatnatyam, is acclaimed as the "essence of dance itself".
Silicon Valley, May 2 nd , Contact Poomima (408 730 9206)	"A Passage to the New Millennium", a classical music concert featuring renowned violinist L Subramaniam and Grammy winner Vishwa Mohan Bhatt will be held at the Herbst Theatre, San Francisco. The program is a fundraiser for Asha and AID.
Yale, Contact Bratin (203 772 2713)	The Yale chapter, launched in Feb. '99, has found considerable support amongst students, faculty, staff, and the local community. Their current campaign, 'Ground Breaking!', has helped raise funds through contributions and from screening "A Passage to India". They will soon be selecting their first project!

Project Update:

Swanirvar, West Bengal (From the April '98 issue of Asha Kiran) ASHA-Madison has renewed funding (\$2000) for 1999-2000. These schools were formerly supported by the MIT and LA chapters.

New Projects:

VOICE, Mumbai, Maharashtra: Asha-St. Louis and a group of Asha-Stars are supporting the non-formal education of street children (\$3400). Children between the ages of 3 and 14 will be taught to read and write, counseled on matters of hygiene and family related issues, and encouraged to join formal schools. The formal education of 125 students in municipal schools and vocational training imparting screen-printing, tailoring, family life education and *diya* making skills will be supported by Asha-MIT (\$4600).

PACHE, Madurai, TN: People's Association for Community Health Education (PACHE) plans to bring

drop-outs and illiterate children under the umbrella of night schools, provide them with primary and life-oriented education, and attain 100% literacy among children in the target villages. The project will affect about 250 children in ten villages of Chellampatti block, Madurai District. Funding for \$2000 for 1999-2000 has been approved, with the money contributed by Asha-Stars and Asha-Princeton.



Children going to school at the Vanavasi Ashram.

Spotlight:

Vanavasi Ashram, Ullanoor, Kerala: Nestled in the forested areas of Wynad District, the Vanavasi Ashram has been working

since 1994 for the educational, social and economic development of minorities and backward classes, especially the *adivasis* (tribal people). The *adivasis* are uneducated and ignorant about the welfare benefits available to them.

The Trust has started a school, *Pazassi Raja Vidyalyaya*, at Ullanoor by taking loans from volunteers. Presently, there are three classes with an enrollment of 41 students. The children are provided with free mid-day meals. Kitchen gardens, maintained by the children, help in the cultivation of vegetables which are used for the mid-day meals.

Asha is jointly funding this project with AID. The NYC-NJ chapter has committed \$2000/year to Vanavasi Ashram for the next three years. The funds will be utilized for introducing 3rd and 4th std. in the next two years and for covering costs of day-to-day activities. This is an Asha Star project. If you are interested in this project, please contact Ranjeet Ranade (rranad@ctp.com).

By the year 2000 every second illiterate person in the world will be an Indian.

We need you!

Join Asha	Give Asha	Partake Asha	Buy Asha
Be a part of a motivated group of people	You can make tax exempt donations to Asha	Participate in various Asha events and programs	Buy Asha merchandise (calendars, mugs and cards)

You can make checks payable to "Asha for Education" and mail them to: Asha for Education, Anthony Hall, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720. 100% of your contributions go towards supporting Asha projects in India. All administrative expenses are borne by Asha volunteers. Asha for Education is a non profit organization.

Visit Asha on the web at <http://www.ashanet.org/>